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Committee for Programme and Coordination
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Agenda item 9
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its forty-second session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: programme planning

(Item 4 (a))

Programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2000-2001

1. At its 5th and 6th meetings, on 11 and 12 June 2002, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2000-2001 (A/57/62).

2. The Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the report of the Secretary-General and responded to questions raised during the Committee's consideration of it.

Discussion

3. Appreciation was expressed for the report on programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2000-2001, which was considered to be a comprehensive, informative and useful reference document on the performance of the Secretariat. The quality of the report with regard to clarity and methodology was commended; the report more closely resembled what was wanted and enabled Member States to review each section easily. The usefulness of the report was considered to be due to its focus on numerical information and the comparative picture regarding programme execution. With the introduction of results-based

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budgeting, it was felt that future reports would include more analysis and qualitative tables.

4. The average implementation rate of 83 per cent of the programmed outputs achieved by the Secretariat was acknowledged as realistic and reasonable. The reporting modalities in the United Nations had been considerably improved with the use of the Integrated Monitoring and Documentation Information System, and it was deemed desirable to extend the system to evaluations.

5. It was noted with concern that not all programme managers accorded monitoring and reporting the required priority. Departments were encouraged to employ the programme monitoring information on a continuous basis throughout the biennium to aid and improve programme management.

6. It was also noted with concern that the lowest implementation rate was observed in programmes related to development, and that the report did not provide precise and correct information. Concern was also expressed that some activities that were not mandated in the medium-term plan were implemented.

7. Concerns were raised over the number and nature of the terminations reported. There had been some increase in the number compared with the previous biennium, and that trend should be closely watched so that the causes could be addressed. It was observed that many of the terminations were decided by the Secretariat and was understood that those decisions were adopted in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8). It was accepted that activities could be carried forward to the next biennium if they were still relevant, but should then be given priority for completion in that biennium. It was stated that the qualitative evaluation of the Millennium Declaration was focused only on accomplishments, and that in the future there should be a more objective presentation dealing with the objectives and indicators of achievement in connection with the activities related to the Millennium Declaration.

8. It was recognized that the programme performance report for the current biennium would be more complex with the introduction of results-based budgeting, given that more emphasis would be on qualitative reporting. Support was expressed for the approach taken by the Office of Internal Oversight Services in conducting the next reporting exercise, and the need for training was emphasized in order to assist programme managers in fulfilling their reporting responsibilities.

9. With regard to the results-based budgeting format, there was still a need to refine the indicators of achievement and expected accomplishments and to strengthen the linkage between them. It was observed that some texts in the quantitative tables were lengthy and did not convey what had been accomplished. Attention should be paid to the correlation between the reported accomplishment realized and the indicators of achievement. Further improvement in the reporting format was anticipated.

10. The presentation of the conclusions drawn from the qualitative assessments by the Millennium Declaration theme was discussed. Several observations were made with regard to the differences in the implementation rates of individual programmes. It was noted that a number of the programmes with implementation rates of less than 80 per cent were those that affected developing countries, particularly those in Africa.

Conclusions and recommendations

11. The Committee noted the implementation rate achieved during the biennium as well as the accomplishments realized and commended programme managers and staff for their initiative and resourcefulness in programme management in response to legislative mandates. In this regard, the Committee emphasized the need to respect all the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, including that concerning delegation of authority.

12. The Committee recommended that future performance reports provide more detailed information in the event of a relatively low implementation rate.

13. The Committee noted the progress achieved in developing the modalities and the format of programme performance reporting and the efforts to strengthen the expertise and commitment of programme managers. It urged all programme managers, without exception to fulfil their responsibilities with respect to self-evaluation and monitoring. It suggested that consideration be given to including in managers' performance appraisals a standard personal objective to ensure full and efficient compliance with those requirements and to develop their use as a management and accountability tool.

14. The Committee emphasized that programme monitoring should be continuous and comprehensive and that it should lead to the appropriate legislative and management adjustments to ensure full implementation of all mandated programmes in accordance with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.

15. The Committee recommended that, in response to General Assembly resolution 53/207 of 18 December 1998, the qualitative evaluation be improved in a comprehensive manner in terms of objectives, strategies, expected accomplishments and indicators of achievement, taking into account Assembly resolution 55/231 of 23 December 2000.

16. The Committee noted the view expressed in paragraph 70 of the report of the Secretary-General on the programme performance of the United Nations for the biennium 2000-2001 that considerable effort was still required to muster sufficient expertise in translating programmatic goals into clear and comprehensive indicators of expected accomplishments, achievement and accomplishments realized, and that the expertise of United Nations staff should be solid enough to develop strong linkages between expected accomplishment, indicators of achievement and the accomplishments reported.